

REMARKS

In view of the following comments, and pursuant to 37 C. F. R. § 1.111, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the Office Action mailed May 29, 2007.

Summary

Claims 6-9 and 21-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claims 6-9, 21-24, and 31-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

In this response, Applicants have amended claim 6. Applicants have also added new claims 34-37. No new subject matter has been entered as a result of these amendments.

Claims 6-9, 21-24, and 31-37 are currently pending.

Claims 6-9 and 21-24: Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 6-9 and 21-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Office Action suggested removing the phrase "so as to form an opening" from independent claim 6. In this response, Applicants have amended claim 6 to remove that phrase. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, against claim 6 and its dependent claims.

Claims 6-9, 23, 24, and 31: Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 6-9, 23, 24, and 31 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. Pub. No. 2002/0066658 ("Agetsuma") in view of U.S. Pat. App. Pub. No. 2002/0033321 ("Miyako *et al.*"). First, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection against claim 6 and submit that the references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all of the recitations of amended independent claim 6. Accordingly, claim 6, and the claims that depend therefrom, are allowable over

the cited references. Second, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection against claim 31 and submit that the cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all of the recitations of claim 31. Accordingly, claim 31, and the claims that depend therefrom, are allowable over the cited references.

Amended claim 6 now recites that the manipulating knob includes “a manipulating knob body having a bend, an operation portion at a first end side of the manipulating knob, and the biasing means at a second end side of the manipulating knob, such that the first end side and the second end side are defined with reference to the bend, and wherein the bend of the manipulating knob body is rotatably supported by the rotary support body.” Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification as filed, and in particular, at pages 27-29.

Neither Agetsuma nor Miyako *et al.*, alone or in combination, teach or suggest all of the recitations of amended claim 6. Specifically, neither Agetsuma nor Miyako *et al.* teach or suggest that “the manipulating knob, the rotary support body, the biasing means and the signal changeover means are integrally put together to form an assembled body” where the manipulating knob includes “a manipulating knob body having a bend, an operation portion at a first end side of the manipulating knob, and the biasing means at a second end side of the manipulating knob, such that the first end side and the second end side are defined with reference to the bend, and wherein the bend of the manipulating knob body is rotatably supported by the rotary support body.”

Agetsuma discloses a “manipulating knob 6” and a “connecting pin 5.” According to the Office Action mailed May 29, 2007 (“Office Action”), the “manipulating knob 6” and the “connecting pin 5” correspond, respectively, to the “manipulating knob” and “rotary support body” claimed in claim 6. Agetsuma discloses that the “manipulating knob 6” is rotatably and pivotally supported by the “connecting pin 5”:

The manipulating knob 6 is constituted of a knob body 10 made of synthetic resin and a knob cover 11. These knob body 10 and the knob cover 11 are bonded to each other and are integrally formed using a plurality of screws 12. As mentioned previously, the manipulating knob 6 is rotatably and pivotally supported on the support member 4 by means of the connecting pin 5 and has a free-end side thereof protruded into the inside of the space 2 from the rear surface of the pad 1c. Agetsuma, ¶10030.

Agetsuma also discloses that a "shaft hole 10a" is formed in the "knob body 10," which allows the "connecting pin 5" to pass therethrough. *Id.*

Figure 4 illustrates the connecting relationship between the "connecting pin 5" and the "manipulating knob 6." As shown in Figure 4, the "connecting pin 5" connects the "manipulating knob 6" with a "support member 4." Furthermore, Figure 4 also shows that the "connecting pin 5" connects the "manipulating knob 6" with the "support member 4" through the "shaft hole 10a" formed in the "knob body 10."

"To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim recitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art." Manual of Patent Examining Procedure ("MPEP") § 2143.03. In contrast to the "vehicle-mounting steering switch" of Agetsuma, which has a "shaft hole 10a" formed in the "knob body 10" that allows the "connecting pin 5" to pass through and connect the "knob body 10" with the "support member 4," amended claim 6 recites that the claimed steering switch has a manipulating knob that includes "a manipulating knob body having a bend" and that the "the bend of the manipulating knob body is rotatably supported by the rotary support body." This is in contradistinction to Agetsuma because the vehicle-mounting steering switch of Agetsuma does not have a "manipulating knob body" with a bend that is rotatably supported by a rotary support body. As shown in Figure 4 of Agetsuma, the "connecting pin 5" connects the "knob body 10" with a "support member 4" such that the body portion of the "knob body 10" is rotatably and pivotally supported by the "connecting pin 5." The "connecting pin 5" simply does not rotatably support any of the bends in the "knob body 10." Furthermore, any modifications to the "knob body 10" to permit the "connecting pin 5" to rotatably support any of the bends in the "knob body 10" would alter the structure and performance of the "vehicle-mounting steering switch" of Agetsuma. Thus, Agetsuma does not teach or suggest the recitation of amended claim 6 of a manipulating knob having "a manipulating knob body having a bend" such that the "bend of the manipulating knob body is rotatably supported by the rotary support body."

In addition, Miyako *et al.* does not make up for the deficiencies of Agetsuma. Miyako *et al.* is generally directed to a "steering wheel switch mounting structure" and

does not teach or suggest a "manipulating knob body." Hence, Miyako *et al.* does not teach or suggest all of the recitations of amended claim 6.

Accordingly, amended claim 6 is allowable over Agestuma in view of Miyako *et al.* As amended claim 6 is allowable over Agestuma in view of Miyako *et al.*, the claims that depend therefrom are also allowable.

Furthermore, neither Agestuma nor Miyako *et al.*, alone or in combination, teach or suggest all of the recitations of claim 31. More particularly, neither Agestuma nor Miyako *et al.* teach or suggest "a manipulating knob that is rotatable in a direction that is perpendicular to the spoke" or that "the manipulating knob protrudes from an opening in a top of the support member and the opening being at least partially surrounded by the front-side and back-side casing members." As addressed in Applicants' previous response, Miyako *et al.* does not teach a manipulating knob. In addition, Agestuma teaches a contrary arrangement. In contrast with Applicants' claimed invention, Agestuma teaches that "[t]he manipulating knob 6 is rotatably and pivotally supported on the support member 4 by means of a connecting pin 5." Agestuma, ¶10028. As shown in Figure 4 of Agestuma, the "manipulating knob 6" is rotatable in a direction that is parallel to the "spoke 1b." This is in direct contradistinction to claim 31, which requires that "a manipulating knob that is rotatable in a direction that is perpendicular to the spoke." Accordingly, neither Agestuma nor Miyako *et al.*, teach or suggest all of the recitations of claim 31.

Not only does Agestuma not teach or suggest all of the recitations of claim 31, but Agestuma actually teaches away from Applicants' invention. (See MPEP § 2141.02, "[a] prior art reference must be considered in its entirety, i.e., as a whole, including portions that would lead away from the claimed invention." (emphasis in original)). Agestuma teaches that the "manipulating knob 6" rotates in a direction that is completely orthogonal and counter to the rotatable direction of the "manipulating knob" claimed in claim 31. Accordingly, there is no motivation or suggestion to combine Agestuma with other references.

Thus, for at least the reasons that neither Agestuma nor Miyako *et al.* teach or suggest all of the recitations of claim 31, and that, in fact, Agestuma teaches away from

Applicants' claimed invention, claim 31, and the claims that depend therefrom, are allowable over Agetsuma in view of Miyako *et al.*

Claims 21, 22, 32, and 33: Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 21, 22, 32, and 33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Agetsuma in view of Miyako *et al.*, and in further view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,131,946 ("Castleman *et al.*"). As claims 21 and 22 depend directly or indirectly on claim 6, these claims are allowable for at least the same reason as claim 6. Castleman *et al.* is generally directed to a "steering wheel mounted on a steering shaft to steer an automobile," and Castleman *et al.* does not make up for the deficiencies of either Agetsuma or Miyako *et al.* In addition, as claims 32 and 33 depend directly or indirectly on claim 31, these claims are allowable over the cited references for at least the same reasons as claim 31, and similarly, Castleman *et al.* does not make up for the deficiencies of either Agetsuma or Miyako *et al.* Accordingly, claims 21, 22, 32, and 33 are allowable over Agetsuma in view of Miyako *et al.* and in further view of Castleman *et al.*

New Claims 34-37

With this response, Applicants have added new claims 34-37. Support for the added claims can be found throughout the specification as filed, and in particular, on pages 28-29, 31-33, and 35-36.

Claims 34-37 depend directly or indirectly on claim 6. Accordingly, claims 34-37 are allowable over the cited references for at least the same reason as claim 6. Furthermore, there may be additional reasons for allowing claims 34-37 over the cited references. As one example, the cited references do not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, the recitation of claim 35 of "a printed circuit board disposed facing a side portion of the bend of the manipulating knob body, and the printed circuit board is arranged in parallel to the rotating direction of the manipulating knob."

Conclusion

Therefore, in view of the above amendment and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly requested.

If for any reason the Examiner is not able to allow the application, he is requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at (312) 321-4200.

Respectfully submitted,

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